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Shortgrass Country

by Monte Noelke

News release from Anchorage, Alaska a few weeks ago said the Alaska Division of Wildlife Conservation had ruled to allow wolves to be killed from airplanes. The director was quoted as saying that by reducing the number of wolves that prey on caribou and moose, moms and pops from Syracuse can come to Alaska and see something they can't see anywhere else in the world.

"Mom and pop" labels frequently cover up for the truth in political actions. It may be recalled that when the first serious proposals to make working illegal aliens against the law, a full-lunged worthy pawed the floors of Congress, trumpeting that the loss of foreign workers threatened mom and pop operations over the nation.

At the time, plenty Congressmens' households worked unpapered aliens as maids and yard men. Clothed and housed in the elegance of D.C. suburbs, the term mom and pop fitted those fancy families about as well as a single-rigged side saddle sets up on the swag of a double humped camel.

Up in Alaska, park rangers and guides worry about the wolves eating up the Eskimos' reindeer rather than about the pleasure of the mom and pop crowd. Natives like the Indians and Eskimos pack a political wallop in Juneau and Washington

that puts bureaucrats to doing two dances the likes of which would make the choreographer of a Broadway show think he'd been sent home to teach tap dancing to a class of third graders.

Don't ask where their political clout comes from; but being treated better than other classes of citizens, those fur-hooded folks might overlook the mom and pop angle and send their tribal leaders up to their respective capitals to amend who had a job the coming year, especially if they kept reindeer herd to wolf packs.

News reports in the same period covered an outbreak of rats in Washington. Subjects ranged from rat poisons to rat protectors. A similar note for woolie and curved-horn goat people in Texas was a proposal that rats be relocated instead of being exterminated, like the program to shoo the eagles back into Mexico, or buy all raptors a one-way ticket to Central America.

Recognizing rats is going to be one of the most tedious environmental problems arising today. Worked from any angle, foster homes for rats are going to be hard to find. Future generations certainly deserve the right to see rodents free and wild in the steers, nibbling on garbage pails and nipping babies in their cribs.

I tried to find an 800 number for mom and pop combinations to poll how they felt about being able to watch

moose and caribou in Alaska versus catching a glimpse of a wolf, or a chance sighting of a reindeer herder. But no listing was available under that heading, nor would dialing 1-800-mom and pop raise an answer.

Naturalists and government officials debate the number of wolves in Alaska, ranging from 5000 to 10,000 head. Canada boasts a prolific population. I may be wrong, but I think I read that the Dominion also has further reasons to be proud of the amount of meat imported from Australia. Minnesota wins the title for wolf gains in the Lower 48; and on the rat scale, other cities besides Washington are experiencing above usual growth.

As the word spreads of the Alaskan commissioner's ruling, it's my best guess that he's going to wish he had a mom and pop for a hideout in Syracuse.